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Human Rights Council
Open-ended intergovernmental working group
on transnational corporations and other business
enterprises with respect to human rights
First session
Geneva, 6 – 10 July 2015

Written statement* submitted by UN Women

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[24 June 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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UN Women inputs to OHCHR

UN Women's inputs below are based on UN's work, UN Women's Flagship report "*Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016*", as well as the SG report on the 20 year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action entitled "*Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly*" (SG Beijing +20 report), available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/ecn620153.pdf>.

UN Women understands that Transnational Corporations and other business enterprises have a critical role to play in the areas of international trade, global labour and capital movements, human rights, and the implications for economies, both locally and globally. Gender equality and the empowerment of women are key drivers of sustainable development in all three dimensions –economic, environmental and social, and must be an integral part of the vision to build a more prosperous and sustainable world, where social and environmental impacts of investment decisions by transnational corporations are gender responsive.

The SG Beijing +20 report highlights that State restructuring and public sector reform in many contexts has increased the influence and impact of private sector actors on women's enjoyment of their human rights in many countries, while at the same time highlighting the growing demand for private actors to be held accountable for the impact of their actions on women's and girls' human rights, both within their borders and extraterritorially.

The report stresses that Member States, international finance institutions and transnational corporations must be held accountable for the promotion, protection and fulfilment of women's and girls' human rights, both within their borders and extraterritorially. While States must continue to regulate the private sector so as to ensure compliance with human rights standards, multi-stakeholder accountability frameworks which include civil society can provide complementary avenues of accountability for the private sector. Such frameworks should include transparent reporting processes and procedures, public consultations and hearings and the ability to submit and handle complaints.

UN Women's report *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016* discusses the need for a set of principles on extra-territorial obligations that provides standards to make governments, international financial institutions, intergovernmental organizations and transnational corporations accountable for actions that affect the realization of rights across the world. Reference is made to the Maastricht principles which outlines the extraterritorial obligations of governments with regard to the realization of rights beyond their own borders, including consideration of the roles of transnational corporations, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental institutions. The Maastricht Principles can be found in the following link.¹

It would be important to ensure full alignment and coherence with existing guidelines and frameworks such as the Global Compact Principles and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in the elaboration of the proposed instrument. It would also be important that the proposed instrument considers and explicitly refers to the gender dimensions of business' role in respecting and promoting human rights, for example, as elaborated through the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) initiative (www.WEPrinciples.org) of the UN Global Compact and UN Women. The WEPs is one of UN Women's primary tools for engagement with business. WEPs present a holistic and comprehensive approach to engaging business on their role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment and provide a roadmap to guide business to drive purposefully the advancement of women in the workplace, marketplace and community. Launched in 2010, the WEPs elaborate the gender dimension of corporate sustainability,

¹ Housed by the University of Maastricht:
<http://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/web/Institutes/MaastrichtCentreForHumanRights/MaastrichtETOPrinciples.htm>.

including both the business sector's responsibility to respect as well its commitment (and the opportunities) to support women's rights. Currently, over 900 companies have signaled their support for the WEPs and committed to taking steps to implement them in their companies and communities.

Finally, it would be interesting to understand more fully how/whether the business community will be consulted throughout the process and/or is part of this open-ended working group.
